Friday Noodles

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Friday Noodles

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Summary

When Luna corners her 'boyfriend' with a meal, she hints at why he is the perfect boyfriend. She has a problem with too much physical touch, and Senkuu is the solution: His name keeps others away. He never undresses her with his eyes. Getting the hint well enough, Senkuu agrees to stop by each Friday for noodles if he could pull away. It was a nice arrangement until her problems got too out of control. Assigned Kohaku as a roomate, the simple Friday noodles are lost and life went on. Until she meets Senkuu years later at a NASA event with a proposition she wasn't ready for. He wants to father a baby created with science with her.

At first, it was just a warning to Luna Wright. Xenos knew her family tree, and he wanted those genes to create future scientists, the next logical step. Once he warns her though, he gets new information that changes everything. With the new info, he runs the math with Xenos, and him. He doesn't want to be the last Ishigami, but dealing with romance to get a kid isn't his style.

He wants to cheat years of trying the old-fashioned way, with science.
But the Kingdom of Science, might have a problem with his decision.

Chapter 1: Luna Wright Wasn't Wrong

Chapter Notes

> I am only posting five chapters of what I have of this story for you. I am an old fanfiction writer with lots of chapters and stories and I'd rather be writing and reading than adding hundreds of chapters here for each story. You can check my profile to continue the story if you enjoyed what you have read.:)

At first when Xeno tells Senkuu his plan about trapping Luna for an heir because of the infamous Wright genes that have developed geniuses consistently over time, he warns Luna at the NASA party. When new information is discovered about her currently looking into in vitro, Senkuu does his own math and decides he wants to cheat years off the unreliable romance relationship option with science too.

Senkuu wants to create a baby with science.

The Kingdom of Science doesn’t agree.

Senkuu saved the world. Senkuu took them to new countries. But when Senkuu asks Gen to date Luna, but cheat on her with Kohaku? Anyone would want to bolt! Add in phobias, village tradition dismantling, and Senkuu's own unobserved hidden feelings? Gen should just be out the door!

But it was Senkuu's brain that gave him the modern world back. It was the same one who first gave him Senkuu Cola. And honestly with the jam Senkuu put himself in? Anyone less probably couldn't do it.

Gen has no misgivings Luna will be fine (with serious restrictions) but dating the tiger that always followed Senkuu around? This was going to be his hardest extended vacation he took.

It looked good? It looked good. Luna blew off her noodles. Though it was almost like building things from scratch again, Senkuu’s group seemed to work so fast through science, that it never felt like she was stuck primitively. Similar to Doctor Xeno.

Tonight? She was cooking for her boyfriend! It had taken some time to get him to come. He was very into science, and he was always off with crazy ideas and crazy places to make their situation and the world better. It wasn’t always as easy to be a girlfriend to him.

But he agreed to stop by tonight, which was great. They had a long, overdue talk to have. Although, Luna had been good at observing Senkuu. She could tell a lot about him before he

even got shot. A lot of people just gave her weird looks sometimes, like she was clueless about everything.

She wasn't, but she also didn't care. Life wasn't short, but life was long, with stupid stone parts ruling most of it! She hung onto her consciousness through all that time by not wanting to be single! It was her one thought to keep her going.

And she was going to keep it. She just needed Senkuu to understand.

Oh! There was a knock at the door. "Coming." It should be Senkuu. When she opened it, she saw him. Perfectly as she expected. No dressing up or anything, that was rare to do anyhow.

"You wanted to see me about something?" he asked.

"Dinner. I have noodles for us," she insisted. He didn't look very pleased.

"That's. Great, I just have to-"

"You can have a couple bites, Senkuu," she insisted.

"Yeah. Sure," he decided as he came over to her. He took the noodle bowl and quickly started to eat.

"I wanted to talk about us," Luna started. He didn't answer back. She expected that. "When I was alive, I was very desireable. You saw Carlos and Max, I had that a lot, and I didn't like it."

Senkuu actually stopped eating a moment to look at her. Like he was trying to figure out if what she had to say was important.

"The one thing that kept me alive through all those thousands of years, was the thought of not being single." Luna looked at him. He was a smart man.

He sipped his noodles a little slower. She made it into a puzzle for him. He didn't say anything yet.

"So far, we've had a great relationship," she added. "You've made me really happy to be your girlfriend so far, Senkuu." One more fragment. A helpful fragment.

"How many boyfriends have you had that were as perfect as me," Senkuu finally asked.

"Zero," she said.

"How many boyfriends have you had that weren't as perfect as me," he asked afterward.

"I couldn't have a boyfriend, because boyfriend always grows to something physical. I don't like. Physical." Oh. His eyes lit up a little, he seemed to get it now.

"Never?"

“Not. Much. Not typically.” A boyfriend. That wasn’t pining for anything else. That is all she ever wanted. Even with a person who didn't feel it back.

“I am ten billion percent sure I get enough of that.” He took another bite of his noodles. “I am still not what you want,” he told her. “You read me well, but I’ve read you too.”

Oh. She didn’t like the way he said that.

“Carlos and Max did something for you. By giving them up, you might have a bright guy? But I’m terrible at physical protection. Having me around as a boyfriend won’t help you out at all.”

Luna knew that. “Most kind of bug off to the side when someone finds a boyfriend.”

“No, they don’t, they hide in the bushes, act like a friend, waiting for their chance again,” he corrected her.

“At least they are in the bushes,” she said back. “I knew the risk.”

“As long as you knew,” he answered.

“I just want a boyfriend without . . . stuff. I could make noodles each time. I could do more as we get more options, Senkuu,” she said. “How about every Friday I make noodles?”

“Just to be sure,” Senkuu said. “You get that this isn’t going to work out perfectly forever.”

“Right. One day, I might want kids or something, and by then, I guess I’ll figure out what I want to do with that, since in vitro isn't really a thing. Maybe it would be later,” she said honestly. “You make me feel better, Senkuu. I did save your life, and you are using me in a sort of political way anyway.”

“Yeah. I knew you’d see that,” Senkuu said. “You even had enough medical training to save me. That’s not a hobby for dummies. You made it hard to see.”

She smiled. “I was even more confident that I made the right decision to save you.”

“Don’t be so confident. I’m human. People change,” he warned her.

“Science is your true love. That won’t change,” she said confidently.

“Science is a constant. Nothing else is a constant. Mankind is an evolving species, it never stays still for long.”

True. People did change. “For right now? For the moment in this evolution, I am here. You are there. I don’t mind your there, if you respect my here.”

“. . . I’ll do Fridays if I’m not incredibly busy. My doctor says it's good healthwise to have something pull me away a good 30 minutes. Night, Luna.”

Good point. That’s why she loved brilliant men. She watched him walk away, probably to do more science things.

“You monster! I don’t want to be away from Senku!” No, this was going to be terrible!

“I should let you in on a secret,” Gen whispered to her. “Senkuu has a type and supremely capable women are the muses of his heart.”

Oh. “Well, I just so happen to be Luna, a capable woman.” Okay, well? Don’t overreact in front of him. He’d appreciate her more with less whininess. All people had types and it made sense that the more whiney, the less she could keep a smart wonderful scientist in the Stone World.

She’d just take it down a notch.

Still.

“Luna!”

The people in the bushes Senkuu talked about. She knew they would show up.

“Luna, I’m sorry you have to be alone this Friday, you know, no date!” Carlos didn’t sound sorry. “Luna. You shouldn’t eat alone tonight, I will join you. You can even come to my area, I have food ready just for you!”

“No.” The more polite room she gave, the more people would take.

“Oh? But Luna-”

Luna closed the door. It didn’t even matter, he was still there.

“Luna? I just want to be a good person, and not leave you alone at dinner. You really have no idea how much you mean to me! Really!”

“Hey, what are you bothering her for? She’s sad.”

Max’s voice of course.

“I know she’s sad, that is why I came over to see her!”

“Well, it looks suspicious that you are here on the one day Senkuu is gone! She’s already feeling bad, she doesn’t need you here to make it worse.” Max knocked on the door. “Luna, you okay?”

“Yes!” She was fine. Without them.

There was another knock. “I have really nice food, Luna.”

“She doesn’t want your food, Carlos.”

“Well she doesn’t want you around either, Max!”

Luna covered her ears. Why? “I am fine to eat by myself tonight.” Senkuu never even stayed that long. One day a week. Of course they knew and wanted to use it to get closer to her. If she let them inside and ate with them, would it be fine? Sure. She’d dealt with them for years. But bugs didn’t fly away any faster when you beckoned them into the room.

Those guys hadn’t exactly been knocking on her door urgently when Senkuu was still there.

And they were still knocking. For now, she would take the lesser of the evils. She opened the door, and invited them both in. It was never just Carlos. It was never just Max. It was both. They could get away with less things when they were both competing for her attention.

She didn’t have enough food, so they immediately went for food. Carlos brought back all the food he had prepared back. Max brought some quick food too. Fine. Most of the time, they tried to get her to express her sorrow to them, in a way that she would end up crying on their shoulders.

She was a little sad. It was expected, but she didn’t use any of their shoulders. She ate her food, ignored most of what they said, and when the food was done, she tried to get them out. “Thanks for the food. I’m tired.”

“I can stay longer?” Carlos suggested.

“No, I can stay longer. I still feel like watching over you is my job,” Max reminded her. “It always does, Luna.”

“I’m tired, and I am going straight to bed. Good night.” She closed the door. In order to make them go away, she had to actually lie down.

Still? Knocks.

“It’s way too early to go to sleep. You just ate too, Luna, that will make your belly feel terrible,” Carlos warned her.

Luna covered her head. They continued to knock.

“Luna, I’m not going to be very far,” Max said. “If you feel bad, just let me know. I’ll take Carlos away if you want me to?”

“No, she doesn’t want me to leave,” Carlos insisted. “Luna?”

“Yes please,” Luna said from her bed.

“Yes? I can come back in?”

No! No.

“I think she said yes about me moving you away,” Max said to Carlos. “You want me to take away-”

“Yes, take away Carlos!” she yelled.

“But you shouldn’t be alone right now,” Carlos said. “Luna?”

“Come with me. Stop bothering Luna,” Max said.

Luna rolled her eyes and sighed. Finally, they were gone.

No, no, no! Again? And to the moon? Senkuu was selected to go see Why Man. And. Hopefully he made it back, but she wasn’t stupid. There was no guarantee a return trip would work right. There was no guarantee anything would perfectly work right. It had to be exact distancing to work! This was. This was.

She couldn’t take it down a notch this time!

“I can’t say goodbye! You can’t make me! I only just reunited with Senkuu. Now he’s leaving the planet and there’s a chance he could die!” It was bad, so bad, why Senkuu? He wasn’t the fighter kind, he was the smart kind. Maybe if the rocket was built in her era? Oh, but then that’s saying she shouldn’t trust in him.

Oooh. No, she had to get it in control. Senkuu and Dr. Xenos both worked on it. They were both brilliant men. “It’s not like I’m stressing. I always keep my cool. Capable woman like me don’t worry about things like imminent doom or space catastrophes. It’ll be okay. You’ll come back safe and sound, right?”

Aww, that look. Senkuu had no stress himself, which made her feel better. His mouth started to move, saying facts that always made her feel better too. “Yeah. No need to worry. The fatality rate in space is historically around 5% so those odds aren’t bad.”

Did he really just state the fatality rate to her from her time when that data had been gathered, when there was so many more people and securities?! Even that wasn’t 0, and now they were in the Stone World, trying to predict every little thing by handwritten calculations! “Is that supposed to be comforting?” Hopefully, that data was comprised with Senkuu and Dr. Xenos over the chances of now.

But 5% was still a loss she didn’t want to take.

She fussed a little, but tried to be brave. But. She could feel how much worse things would get while her boyfriend was gone. They had gone and unpetrified so many people to get that far.

Senkuu still didn’t seem to get everything. He got some, which she was happy about. That’s all she wanted to say about her phobias or her sister or anything.

His little visits helped. Him never denying the boyfriend thing really helped. Luna could see the world slowly shifting back to the world she remembered. And that? Was a little terrifying.

Because gaining more of that back, without the strictness of government in society. It spelled trouble. But, Senkuu kept things okay. Every chance she had to address him to someone, she was sure to say ‘boyfriend Senkuu’. Everyone had learned who was the leader, and who was getting things done. Senkuu.

Genius men did that. They earned their spot with their cool minds and inventions. They didn’t think about things that didn’t matter. They were often obsessive or arrogant. She scored big with Senkuu, he wasn’t that arrogant. He wasn’t real selfish. He was a good friend with normal people, but clearly an obsessed genius.

Not just genius men, her mother had been similar too. So had her sister, though, her sister held different warnings for her . . .

/// “Don’t wear things like that, Luna.”///

/// “Pretty dresses will get you in trouble if you aren’t willing to put out, trust me.”///

/// “You are already well endowed, quit trying to show anything off if you aren’t interested in more.”///

/// “Luna, just get a husband that takes a side piece and call it good! No one wants you without anything else!” ///

“Hey.”

Oh. An unfamiliar voice. There had been more of those lately. Where was Max right now? She turned and saw one of the newer people that had been unpetrified.

“I know you.” He pointed at her. “Luna Wright. Right? Famous heiress? Isn’t your dad some great inventor or something?”

Max? Oh why would he be around, he wasn’t her bodyguard anymore. He came and went like everyone else.

“No, wait, it was your grandfather. Wasn’t it?” he asked.

Okay, so far, guy was fine in conversation.

“You must have really wanted to make something of yourself back then. Could have, before all this happened.”

“I was in medical school,” she answered trying to be polite.

“So a genius like your grandfather?”

“Not really,” she admitted. “Who are you?”

“Lenny.” He held out his hand. She shook it. “Pretty big honor to meet someone like you.”

“Sure. Nice to meet you.” She started to walk away, but of course, he walked right beside her.

“Pretty cool, isn’t it?” He asked her. “Stone World is hard now. It feels weird, but I love the fact that this could even happen. Someone like you and me, couldn’t have ever met before the Stone World. You would have had bodyguards and everything. Now, we can talk like two normal people.”

“Great, yeah, I am going home,” she said.

“I heard a rumor you might be dating Senkuu,” he said.

“Yes, I am.” She would definitely use that.

“Funny thing is, I also hear a lot of rumors that he doesn’t even care about you really. He doesn’t get down with girls much. He doesn’t get down with guys much either.”

“All just rumors,” she said.

“It’s a genius thing, right? More obsessed with science than the real pretty girl he has at his side. Real shame. Why are you even bothering with him? Political thing? Is it one of those class things?”

Luna stopped talking. She was just walking straight toward Chelsea now instead of her place. “Chelsea, how is everything going? Are you as worried as me about everything?” She would take her mind off this guy and focus somewhere way more important.

“I am,” Chelsea admitted. “I hope everything turns out okay. I really am excited to know who Why Man is though.”

“Me too.” The mystery to be solved. The unsolvable mystery was going to be answered soon. She wouldn’t want to be thinking about it right now. She wanted to go home and think about something else, so she could worry less. Science was science, and something would happen. With this guy at her side though, getting more involved seemed like a safer bet to-

“I’ll see you around, Luna.”

To make that guy go.

“Ooh.” Chelsea watched him leave and looked toward Luna. “That guy was cute. Are you dating him?”

What?! “I’m dating Senkuu.” She knew that. Everyone knew that.

“Uh huh.” Chelsea sounded like she didn’t believe that. “He’s probably more fun if you know what I mean.”

“No. I’m dating Senkuu.”

“Really?” Chelsea was getting too close. “You know that Senkuu’s not . . . not really . . . I mean-”

“Senkuu and I are just fine,” she quickly said. “I’m heading home.”

“To your domicile?” Chelsea said.

“Yes.” To her place. To her spot. To her sanctuary away from all things.

Chapter 2: He Would Always Be Her First Boyfriend

She hated to do it. But once again. Lesser of the evils.

Carlos on one side of her. Max on the other. She called them over for food.

Luna didn't have money, but Max naturally wanted to protect her. "Things are getting weirder around her. People aren't respecting Senkuu and I's relationship. They are making nasty rumors, which isn't right. I love Senkuu dearly."

"Oh, people talk," Carlos said slowly. "Although? Miss Luna. I do have to say that Senkuu is a little too on-the-nose on your Friday nights. It's the only time you really see him."

"I see him outside of that." She was interested in all of the things he was doing, just like a lot of others.

"What I mean is? He doesn't really convey that he is your boyfriend," Carlos said. "You should really be with someone who would proudly show they were your boyfriend."

Damn! Even Carlos? Senkuu seemed fine to her. She had grown up with a vision of most of her family being more distant and obsessed with their own things.

"I think people are being jerks, Miss Luna," Max said to her. "I guarded your mother too sometimes. I saw the same thing between them. Not everyone is super expressive, especially when it comes to your family, but if you say he is your boyfriend, I believe you."

Thank goodness. It was holding a little bit.

"I can't take it anymore!" Carlos stood up suddenly. "It's just not true! He doesn't like anyone like that, not even you, and I can't do this!" He grabbed Luna's hand. "That night everything happened, I was going to propose to you with a real platinum ring! I even kept it but Dr. Xenos took it frome me!"

Oh no, no, no! He was getting too-!

Max grabbed him, but it was too late.

Carlos kissed her. Not just a kiss on the cheek. Not even a gentle kiss. He forcefully opened her mouth with his and slammed his tongue onto hers. And it was absolutely disgusting, just like she always knew it would be.

What a first kiss.

"If this hadn't happened, you would have been mine, Luna!"

No. She wouldn't have. Max carried him away and then swiftly came back to check on her.

“Are you okay, Miss Luna? I can’t believe he did that, what a creep! It didn’t matter if he was gonna marry you, that was uncalled for!”

He wouldn’t have married her. She wouldn’t have married him. She got up and tried to wipe her tears away.

“Miss Luna, are you okay?”

No. “Uh huh. Lunch is over.” She looked toward Max. Max came over and hugged her. It’s what she needed, but not what she needed from him. Max was a double edged sword, and she just lost Carlos.

“I’ll keep him away from you as long as you want me to,” Max said. “You didn’t deserve that. You deserve nothing but nice kisses from a nice guy, Luna. Not him. Never him.”

And yet Max still spoke like there was some kind of competition. Not him. Never him? He wasn’t very far from stating the obvious.

“I would never treat you like that,” Max said. “I’d do nothing but protect my wife.”

Wow. Straight to wife.

“He’s a terrible match for you,” Max said, holding her closer. “You deserve a better match. Someone who could protect you. Especially with the Stone World opening up to society, you need protection, Miss Luna. I could do that for you.”

Oh great. Without Carlos, she had Max. If she pushed Max away, she’d have no guard that guarded her just because of the love in his heart.

“Miss Luna?”

“I miss Senkuu so much.” Simple pasta. Simple conversation. Simple smiles. Simple exchange. Simple boyfriend.

“Carlos is terrible, Luna. Senkuu probably isn’t going to get into you,” Max said. “What’s wrong with me? What’s ever been wrong with me?”

Oh, she didn’t want this moment. Her next move. What was her next move? She could tell Max was on the verge of leaving. Not just for lunch, but looking in on her altogether.

Max helped stand her back up, but didn’t say much.

“Thanks for the food, Luna.” It wasn’t cheery. That was scary. He left.

Would he still be looking in on her, or did she just lose her equiilibrium? She didn’t even know. Not knowing what to do next, she just went to rinse her mouth out with water.

In this new and terrifying world, it was risky to stay with Senkuu. He’d already warned her, he wasn’t protection. He wasn’t. His reputation was enough, but too many people could see the truth.

Max or Senkuu? Give into a life where she knew that she'd have to do things she didn't want for protection, or keep the risk and stay with Senkuu?

She spit out the water. "Senkuu."

Areas were getting bigger, but the old village crew tended to stay together. So it wasn't a huge coincidence Chrome found himself in that kind of situation. Although she wasn't part of the village, Luna tended to stay near Ishigami's original residents, just like she did with Senkuu. Chrome even knew Senkuu went over to see her on Fridays for just a bit.

While he was taking care of some wood, he saw her usual two guys around her. She didn't feel like eating inside of her own domicile. It was a nice day, so that wasn't too out of the ordinary. But then?

Chrome saw one of them physically grab her, kiss her, and profess her love? Disgusting! He gritted his teeth. That was terrible. No one really understood Luna's obsession with Senkuu, but that couldn't have been more uncalled for!

He watched the other guy take care of him which was good. Poor girl looked so confused and just . . . ugh. Then, when Chrome figured it was over, he kept hearing that guy's words. Was her own old guard basically making a deal to protect her if she was with him?

He watched him walk away. She went away for a bit into her house. Shakily though.

When he noticed one of the new people heading toward it too. Enough was enough.

Chrome headed over to her home. She had been so out of it, she left her door open. The new guy was trying to hold her hand. "Hey, Luna." The guy stopped when he saw Chrome. Nobody liked others in their business. "Sorry to bug you. I'm chopping wood right now. Do you want any? If so, you can come with me to chop some wood."

"Sure, I'll take some." She moved away and toward him. "Where is it? I can chop."

Chrome walked with her over to his wood stack. "You okay? I don't want to pry too much."

"Huh? Oh." She looked at the wood. "It's okay, Senkuu won't get jealous."

"That's not what I meant," Chrome said as he sat the wood down. "You okay?"

"Yeah." She smiled at him, but she clearly was faking that smile. "How are you doing?"

"Going to go check on things here soon," he said. "Senkuu should be coming back soon." He watched her with the axe. Maybe he should actually chop the wood. Even though she was standing still, she was still shaking.

"Such good news. I-I missed my boyfriend," she said.

“Yeah.” Chrome didn’t know how to describe it. He never really thought that much about Luna before. He thought she was just a little out of the space of reality for making Senkuu a boyfriend to save his life. But? Maybe she wasn’t what she appeared to be. “Is that other guy Max coming back?”

“I don’t know. I don’t care,” she added a little more firmly.

Chrome didn’t have to interrupt. Luna was a medical person, she must have known she wasn’t in the right state yet. She didn’t swing right away, she was sort of moving the axe to and fro.

/// “Don’t ever let anyone-Don’t ever let anyone- Don’t ever let anyone!” ///

Stop the thoughts. Stop the pattern. Luna took several deep breaths as she moved the axe safely to and fro. She was in the middle of panic, she could not swing the axe yet. She’d hurt herself or Chrome. Her thoughts were going circular, making her body react against her wishes, which flooded her with thoughts, which flooded her body again. It was a cycle of panic and she needed to break it.

Deep breaths. She was fine. Everything was fine.

Deep breaths. Her body was fine. It was psychological, she just needed to focus on it. It was fine.

/// “Luna, you were here?!” Her mother scooped her up like a light laundry basket. “How long have you been in here?!” ///

Deep breaths. Chrome wasn’t in a hurry. Worst thing he could do is take the wood away. Simple goal. Think of something else. Caves. The boat rocking when she got there. Senkuu. Senkuu’s little tick when he scratched inside his ear. His outfit. Visualize his outfit and the scratch. The weird smile. He had a cool, almost evil grin. E=mc squared.

Chrome kept watching her. She was taking deep breaths between. When she started to look a little better, she started to swing the axe.

She wasn’t the best at chopping wood, but she did her best. Chrome watched as the guy from before finally left the area.

“Wood.” She placed down the axe. “A girl always needs her wood. Thanks, Chrome. I can tell why Senkuu likes you so much.”

Senkuu liked everyone. Odd thing to say. “Don’t mention it.” Chrome watched her leave.

Things were getting one billion percent tense. One medusa and a hell of a plan.

“Senkuu.” Chrome came over to him. “You seen Luna yet?”

“Not yet.” It wasn’t Friday either. He was just studying the medusa that stayed, ideas circling in his head.

“She got kissed while you were gone.”

“Ah.” That was weird. She didn’t like that kind of thing, but maybe she was evolving. “She wants to move on, she can.”

He didn’t give any details. “What do you know about Luna?”

“Her grandfather was a famous inventor, heir to a famous father who made social connections, heir to a famous mother who modernized the fashioned industry with her own ideas, her sister was more of a mad scientist, Carlos was her driver, Max was her bodyguard, she was a first year medical student when she get petrified, Xenos found her and forced her to help with Corn City.” He didn’t just shut up and share noodles on Friday. Sometimes she would tell him about her, while he went on about science plans he was working on.

“She was really something back then. Someone special. Or, she knew special people, meaning she was special,” Chrome said. “I think her guard flaked out on her.”

Senkuu continued to work. He had no idea what Chrome really wanted or was trying to say, but he was going to work until he eventually got to the point.

“Senkuu, she didn’t kiss anyone. One of those guys grabbed her and kissed her. The other guy took care of the other guy, but then he came back and made any more help from him? Sound like a bad proposition to her. Then after they left, another weird guy came by. If you want to keep up this whatever you have with her? You’re going to have to think of something for all these weird guys.”

“Mmmm.” That’s what he was getting too. What a time, he was already trying to think about the next big thing, but Chrome might be onto something. If people learned about her, it might affect things. Her family was famous. Maybe, maybe not. She wasn’t exactly on TV or anything herself.

But? Someone literally forced a kiss on her too. He knew that ten billion percent wasn't right. Bringing it up wasn't his place either. Maybe. “I’ll bring over some noodles to her place tonight.” He’d get a feel for the situation before he figured out a next step.

She missed him. That was clear. She appreciated the noodles and was all ears on hearing his future plans. Tonight though, she wasn't sharing as much. "On the quieter side tonight, Luna."

"I just want to hear about your plans," she answered. "They sound fascinating and surreal. You've come so far though, it's hard to believe it's not possible in some shape with you."

Hmm. He went ahead and explained to her more. He didn't touch on anything Chrome said, he wanted to see how things went without poking anything. He was there about thirty five minutes, and left.

While he was leaving though? He couldn't help but notice three newly petrified people hanging around the area. "Can I help you?"

"Nah." One of the guys pointed to the guy in the middle. "This guy said there was a famous heiress that lived here."

"He said that she was absolutely gorgeous, and from what I caught of her, he was right," the other one said.

"So you're Senkuu," the guy in the middle that was causing the trouble said. "You must be the boyfriend, right? Because I heard that you really weren't into girls."

"Maybe he's into guys?"

"He's not into guys either."

"So are you, or are you not that sweet thing's boyfriend?"

Daaaaamn. Senkuu took a small step back on instinct. Information was known.

"Lenny over here said her family was basically a fleet of geniuses. Grandpa. Mom. Dad. Is that why you are hanging out with her? Big brains think alike?"

"No way, I met her," Lenny said. "She's no genius. Gorgeous though, none compared."

Okay. Waiting. Okay? Senkuu looked around. Investigating didn't mean he was completely stupid. He'd gone too far in the Stone World not to have something.

There she had been. Kohaku was hanging out in a tree just a distant away. Good. When it came to science, he was brilliant. When it came to basic physical fighting, he would get his ass beat.

He stood with more confidence. "Yeah. I'm her boyfriend. Science is our love language."

"Oh? Thought she was just making that up," one of them said. "Especially when she was just kissing a guy earlier. Some old love connection."

"That wasn't a kiss," Senkuu corrected them.

“Well, what did you do about it, Senkuu?” the guy in the middle named Lenny asked. “Did you put him in his place for kissing your girl?”

“It wasn’t a kiss, it was a seize and capture.” They left him with an awful question to answer. So, he didn’t.

“Doesn’t sound like you did anything to him,” Lenny said. “Probably because you are a super top good leader for the Kingdom of Science. That’s what you call yourselves, right? The Kingdom of Science?”

“That’s right.” Senkuu wouldn’t back down from that. “I am the leader of the Kingdom of Science.”

“How’d you get that position? I was curious, so you don’t have to answer,” Lenny said.

“How’d he get it?” One of the men asked.

“By marrying the leader’s daughter, and then almost instantly divorcing her,” Lenny mentioned. “He’s super smart. That’s . . . about it.”

“So is your boyfriend label more of another political move?” One of the men asked him. “Is she actually available?”

“I think you got the most out of the relationship already. You did it for a guy named Xenos’ group,” Lenny said. “Dr. Xenos is already your ally. Research can be fun, can’t it?”

“It doesn’t take much research, these are all basic facts you are saying,” Senkuu said. Everything was supposed to sound impressive, to make him feel weaker. They didn’t have to do that, he already felt weak. He did have to get strong enough to survive the trip to the moon, but it wasn’t anything that would help him in this situation.

“Sure,” Lenny said. “Come on guys. Let’s celebrate the end of the petrification. I hear they made special drinks.”

“Sounds good,” one of them said.

“I don’t know. It’s a beautiful night, I might hang out here longer,” the other one said. He looked toward Senkuu. “Hope you all have fun.”

“No way are you staying here,” the other unnamed guy said to him. “I don’t trust you outside the place of a gorgeous heiress. I’m staying too.”

“I don’t trust either of you,” Lenny said. “I guess we’ll all just stay.”

“I think you should all probably go.”

Boy, Kohaku liked to take her sweet ass time sometimes. Senkuu watched as Kohaku swung over like only she can.

“I think all three of you should go,” she warned them. “Go get a drink. Cool off. And don’t come back.” She glared at them. “I’m part of the Kingdom of Science. I’m the Fighter Division.”

There. They ten billion percent didn’t like that. Each of them finally left the area. Senkuu breathed again.

“I think Luna might be in some trouble, Senkuu,” Kohaku said. “Not all boys just study science. How many people do you think he told?”

“As many as he wanted,” Senkuu said.

Oh, that was so nice. Senkuu really was the best.

He came in and greeted her. He never undressed her with his eyes. He had a nice bowl of noodles to share. He shared about himself, not what he could do for her. He was waiting for her to talk about herself like a human being, though she didn’t want to talk about much.

He never groped her. Never tried to hug her to make her feel better with the intention just to touch her. He didn't even bring anything up, though Chrome probably told him. Chrome was one of his closest friends next to Taiju because he was interested in science strongly before they even met.

Senkuu would never grab her like a thing. Steal her damn first kiss. That's why he was the perfect boyfriend.

He treated her like another human being. It was true that romantic wasn’t exactly in his vocab. His vocab was filled with science, not romance. Maybe it was all science and no romance. But, that was okay, because not everything normal was in her vocabulary either. People just didn't know it. They saw a volumptuous body, a soft sweet voice, and always wanted more.

They would never get more. No one ever had a chance to get more. Before she could even go to school, that chance sailed away. Playing dolls in a room. Under the laundry because her doll needed her penthouse. Sister and forbidden stupid guy trying to be under the radar.

Months of warnings of everything. Years of warnings of everything from her mad scientist of a sister. Not even in first grade, what areas to cover up. Not even in second grade, no spaghetti straps, wear pants, thick sweaters. Not even in third grade, watch every kid in your classroom, don’t go to the bathroom alone, statistics about how many started to get hurt. More, more and more.

Her sister petrified her body way before stone had a chance.

“Hey!”

Luna turned. Kohaku?

Kohaku came in with her stuff. “Easiest way.” She placed it down. “So? Here's the deal, Luna. Your status isn't something just anyone can take on. Especially not Senku. So forget dating me. Forget pretending with him. I am just moving in.”

Really? “You are moving in?”

“Yep.” Kohaku smiled. “I am really good at fighting,” she winked. “I hope someone does try something because I love to kick their butts.”

Well? No more Senku. No more noodles. He was only with her on Fridays because it was easy. It really put a nail into it.

For a little while? She wasn’t single. She had a smart, wonderful boyfriend. She could have gone on like that forever, but her situation was now too sticky.

She would have to bag another genius at some point. Geniuses tended to be more involved with science than her body. Just how she liked it.

But? Senku would always be her first boyfriend. She would never forget that.

Chapter 3: Get Excited

Senku was at the newly restored NASA. His excitement wasn't great. The whole time travel moment. Byakuya was nothing but bones.

So.

He and Xenos were laughing stocks for the time travel tries. But Xenos still wanted to come to their event. Senku didn't get it. He almost didn’t come, but that seemed like giving into their bullying. He had enough of bullies.

Then? He saw someone he hadn't really thought about in years. “Friday noodles.”

She hadn’t seen him, until he said that. “Senkuu?”

Luna Wright. All good in the world again. Except that two familiar faces were still following her. He had noticed them at Taiju's wedding. He was busier focused on other things, but now it was right in front of him. And this time, he didn’t have exciting things to focus on. So.

She noticed his disapproving looks. “Apologies,” she said. “Lesser of two evils.”

“What do you mean, Miss Luna?” Carlos said.

“I didn’t know you would be here,” she said to Senkuu. “I guess I should have figured you would be involved in NASA.”

Maybe. Maybe not. “A little Déjà vu for you, isn’t it?” It was a similar event like this where she had been petrified.

“I was invited,” she said. “Doctor Xenos wanted to see me.”

Xenos wanted to see her? For what? Huh. “So, did you evolve?”

She smirked. “I evolved slightly? I am not where I once was anymore, but I still haven't found the one.”

“Funny. I think I am evolving too.”

“You don't look as cheery as you usually were. What's wrong?”

“Huh? Oh. The noodles suck here.” Luna was smarter than a lot of people knew. “Turned out my greatest next thing to get excited about? Did not pan out.”

“Oh. The time machine. For sure, Senkuu?”

“Ten billion percent sure,” someone from NASA laughed toward him.

“That was hella rude,” Senkuu called him out. “Didn't someone teach you to have manners?”

“Didn't someone teach you that time travel was impossible?” He said right back.

“At least we tried. We took mankind to it's highest chance.” Senkuu wouldn’t deny it.

“More like its greatest downfall.”

“I am so sorry.” Luna shook the man's hand. “What part did you play in bringing everyone back again from Stone World?”

“I helped here.”

“Yes, but, what did you contribute? Where are you in your accomplishments to the Stone World? Were you on the maiden voyage of the Perseus? Were you part of the Kingdom of Sciences personal village?”

Heh. That shut him up. He even walked off.

“You see everything to its fullest, no matter how small the matter, Senkuu,” she responded. “Lending me Kohaku really helped back then.”

It was a coward’s move, but Senkuu could tell she needed help, and he wasn’t gonna be enough. So, yeah, he had Kohaku stay. She was even supposed to show her more fighting techniques. “Kohaku’s useful in fighting.”

“Oh. Is she here tonight?” Luna asked.

“I don’t think so.” Kohaku. She was always beside him, since Ishigami village. “She’s still involved in the Kingdom of Science but parties like these aren’t her bag.” They weren’t even his. He was there because he wasn’t going to let others think he couldn’t handle his own failure.

“Miss Luna Wright?” Xenos came straight over and shook her hand. “I am thrilled that you and your family could come.”

Thrilled? Why was he so thrilled?

“Thank you for the invitation. I was just catching up with my . . . Senkuu.” She caught herself.

Heh. “Habits die hard.” She called him boyfriend more than anything else back then.

Back then, he wasn't against romance, he just had no time for it. His mind flowed obsessively through the steps to free humanity. Being stuck as the boyfriend just because she saved his life didn’t help. It was more of a political thing, the reason he even bothered for so long.

He watched her leave and speak to someone else she recognized.

"I thought you said you were not coming tonight?" Xenos pointed out.

“Well? I thought about it and decided I would.” He wouldn't let the asses get him down. Maybe he did not get time travel, but he did get the Stone World unpetrified. That counted for something.

“Fine.” Xenos was fixing his sleeves.

“Why are you interested in Luna?” There was no reason he should have spoke with that much regard to her.

“Because. She is an elegant answer to what I need,” Xenos answered back.

Need? “What do you need from Luna Wright?”

“I am still a man, Senkuu. Besides science, there is one thing man is for.” He was fixing his hair. “Sorry. I am stealing your old fake girlfriend.”

What? “What do you mean?”

“She's pretty. She became a decent medical specialist. Those are just bonuses, her family has multiple geniuses in it. Her grandfather is not even the most exceptional in her line. Children with her will keep a family lineage smart as a whip. All in all, an elegant choice.” Xenos stared at her. “Quite elegant.”

He was gonna what? “She won't go for you.”

“On the contrary, she likes bright science men,” he answered. “We aren’t petrified in stone anymore, Senku. Time is moving. If I start now, I could probably have at least a few children with her taking over for me in my future. Descendants are important, especially with everyone that was lost. The biggest and brightest to move us on, will come from future sons and daughters.”

That irked Senkuu. It shouldn't. She could choose what she wanted. She wasn’t into physical stuff though. At least? She did say she evolved. How did she evolve? Was she okay with that now? Did it scare her, or disgust her back then? “You don't get Friday noodles.” It popped out. He had no idea what that meant. “I don't know why I said that.”

“When a scientist has a massive problem, that problem becomes their world. When that major problem ends, then a scientist comes back down to the level of man. I know, I have been through both boats more than once in my lifetime.”

Mmmm. “I don't like it.”

“Being a part of man is also a part of science.”

That wasn’t what he meant. He watched Xenos start to head off. He headed in the opposite direction of Luna though. Senkuu watched him shake . . . “Her grandfather’s hand.” Of course he wasn’t going to ask her straight on, he was going to use stupid connections.

Hmph. “No use standing here.” If Xenos wasn’t meeting her head on, he’d take the opportunity to warn her.

“Friday noodles.” Why’d he do that again? He was supposed to say Luna.

Luna smiled at him. “Hi again, Senkuu.”

“Listen,” he said seriously. “Xenos is bad news, through and through.” He shook his head. “Don’t get involved with him.”

“Involved with him?”

“He’s going off to talk to your family line. They are probably going to try and convince you to give him a chance. He doesn’t have your best interests in mind,” he tried.

“I don’t understand, Senkuu?” She didn’t get it at all.

“He sees the math, not you,” Senkuu warned her. “Your family is full of geniuses. That kind of thing is rare. He wants to use his connection to you, just for his future science children.” He expected something for a reaction.

He wasn’t expecting that.

“Dr. Xenos is interested in having a baby with me?” She fidgeted her fingers. “Uh. That’s good maybe?”

“What do you mean that’s good maybe?” In what world was him using her like that considered good?

“He’s really brilliant,” she pointed out.

“The brilliant cool man is your type is not a good enough reason.” He glanced toward Carlos and Max too. “You are surrounding yourself with the wrong people.” She may have earned her medical academics now, but if she was still toting everything? Kohaku should have beat them up. She had asked. He didn’t want to mess with the problem anymore. Clearly, he should have.

“Usually you don’t get excited like this except with science, Senkuu. I know how Xenos was in Corn City. I also know how he was when he joined us.”

“When the world got lost in the shuffle, he asked his medical student he controlled to do what?” Senkuu almost glared at her. She was not this stupid.

She tightened her fingers around her purse. “Do you remember how you told that you being my boyfriend wasn’t going to last forever? That people evolved? I already warned you that I knew that too, because I might want kids one day.”

Oh. That's right. "Is that how you evolved?"

"Well." She was starting to blush. "Not just that. Um. I got over some of my fears . . . using Carlos."

What? "You. Did. What."

"Not like, major. I don't know if I want major. With him. At least. I've gotten better at basic intimacy. Hugging. Kissing. More intimate touches. He lets me practice with him."

He glanced back toward Carlos. So that's why he was still around? Practice. "Scientifically, it makes sense. You are trying to get over a fear, and someone is willing to help you get past it." On the other hand, it was that scumbag! Why?

"He understands. I told him finally that it wasn't his fault for the rejection, it's just that I didn't like intimate things so much," Luna said. "I don't know if I'm good enough for any of . . . of what Xenos might want though."

No. She wasn't.

"I don't know." She squeezed her purse harder. "I was already digging into how the invitro programs were going."

"Much better idea." He could back that up. "You'd be great as a mom, but you would suck with Xenos."

"But?" She rubbed her ear lightly, her double colored hair falling against them a little as she took her hand back away. "I don't know if I could complete a . . . a loop with him."

Right. Her weakness. She was working through things with Carlos (worst idea ever), but yeah. Xenos referred to her being pretty. "Highly doubt he's wanting in vitro either. It's good you've been working on your erotophobia, but your genophobia is still keeping you tied." Yep, he saw her really curl up. "We are talking your future with Xenos, we are naming it. Am I right on the names, or am I wrong, Luna?" He could accept that he was wrong too, but they needed to start somewhere. She wasn't going to make a disasterous decision because she was avoiding language."

"Nothing ever happened to me, it was . . ."

Yeah. "I don't need details to understand the science behind your cognitive behavior, Luna. You already know where it comes from. You are working on it." With the world's worst partner. "With Carlos." Why was Max around then? Nope, not the focus. "Taking on Xenos. He's. A great scientist. Not a great person. Your kids might not grow up so kind with him around, and he will stay around. Even if you two don't work out, I guarantee he'll be there."

"He'd be there though. They'd have a father that was interactive in their lives." That didn't dissuade her at all.

"Miss Luna?" Carlos came over. "Are you still speaking? Your grandfather wants to see you."

Sure, of course he did. For Xenos to introduce everything, which she still wasn't-

///"The one thing that kept me alive through all those thousands of years, was the thought of not being single."///

Her thought. Her repeating thought. The thing that made her make him a boyfriend for saving his life. "What's Max for?" It popped out.

She didn't answer right away. "I don't do anything yet. As I get better. I will . . ."

Her genophobia, she planned on working through it with Max. Yeah, of course, why else would he be sticking around watching Carlos make out with Luna if he wasn't promised something too?

"You already figured that out, Senkuu," she noticed. "I better go see what grandfather wants."

Senku watched her walk away. She was going to pick Xenos. Who wouldn't? He was going to be there in her kids lives. Xenos never had any interest before. The aging thing he mentioned. Xenos was in his late 30's now. Teaching a kid while they were growing, majority being in the first fifteen years or so. 45. He wanted more than one, pregnancy took away almost a year, too young to learn at 1 or 2.

50's. Xenos' future scientists would come mostly around when he was in his 50's.

Thats if everything worked like a charm. The human body wasn't a clock that just said success, had children. If there were complications, it might drain another 5-10 years. In that case, he might be in his 60s first.

He was also using a more direct access.

If Senkuu actually wanted children? He would have to learn romance that he was terrible at. Select someone compatible. Know chances were low he would do everything perfectly. Keep trying. Get better at dating and his skills.

If he assumed he was more average, he could get someone in 5-10 years to marry. Try 10 for average. Baby decision was usually not right away, maybe 2-3 years in a marriage or so.

So maybe around 33 or so for the average. For someone who didn't know romance, he would need to add a heavier handicap. Maybe 5-10 slowdown. So 40-45ish. Then waiting to get pregnant, hard or easy. Maybe 3. 43. A good 15 years.57ish. 47ish if he was lucky.

The timing wasn't too bad, if he wanted that sort of thing. Someone to raise and teach science. Like Byakuya had done with him. Byakuya. Who was long gone. No more lessons. No more Ishigami's, just him.

He looked over toward everyone there. A lot of people were brought back. Yuzuriha's family. Taiju's family. They were there to see their wedding.

No worries. No one would be there for his weddings. Any celebrations. No one was there for going up in the rocket. When he unpetrified the rest of humanity. Anything really. He was the

last Ishigami. “I don't want that, but romance is ridiculously hard.” While he pursued, it would also interrupt his own scientific pursuits, slowing it down.

Yeah, he had to keep going. That would put a dent in the time that he actually pursued too. He didn't think about that.

Shoot. Most women were not going to like how much he liked science either. Even strangers at first thought he was too intense. The village had a lot of problems with him. Without Chrome, getting the village would have been impossible.

That would probably lower chances even more. Yeah, the factoring was getting worse.

Meanwhile? Friday noodles never had a problem, he was the - “great boyfriend. Wonderful boyfriend. Best boyfriend. Perfect boyfriend.”

A bit of an evil smirk probably appeared on his face. “I am going to keep her safe from Xenos, and cheat myself to another Ishigami much faster.”

This was it. He could feel it.

His answer was Luna Wright.

Oh, that was . . . tough! Senkuu never made things tough like that at all. He was always the safe guy just talking to her and eating noodles. This time? He knew her problem and named it out loud. He was giving her a lot more of his time to discuss things. Instead of science, she and Xenos was his absolute focus.

Halfway through she already knew she’d been blushing but it just grew heavier. They didn’t dance around with words and innuendos, she said the things she was actually doing. She wasn’t planning on any of that tonight, nor was she planning on this thing with Xenos.

He’d be a good father who would teach his kids. Senkuu thought that was bad, but that was good. If things didn’t work out between them, then they would still have a father that cared about them and stayed in their lives. That was something that she wasn’t going to get from in vitro. It would be just her. Which she was fine with, but what a better opportunity for them.

But Senkuu was coming out of his shell because of Xenos. He was that against it. Senkuu was a bright and clever man. Xenos wasn’t the kindest soul alive, but he also wasn’t the worst. He did have her work for him in Corn City, but he also used his brilliance to make the world sustainable before Senkuu appeared.

She smiled as she arrived, taking a seat next to her grandfather. Xenos was not seated yet, but he was coming over.

“Hey.” Senkuu appeared and took the empty seat next to her.

Oh. Damn. She was blushing again, she knew it. She squeezed her bag again. He wasn’t going to make this decision easy, he was going to make it as hard as possible. It didn’t help that he had always been the most wonderful boyfriend on Fridays with noodles.

“I was going to sit there, Senkuu,” Doctor Xenos said.

“I guess I got here first,” Senkuu said back to him.

“Surely.” Doctor Xenos politely sat on the other side of her grandfather. “I don’t think it matters much when you got here.”

“I’ve gotta believe it does,” Senkuu said back to him.

Her poor purse. If it was alive, it would be dead by now.

“Hello Luna,” her grandfather said to her. “I was talking to Doctor Xenos not long ago. I believe he has a proposal that makes some sense. I know you’ve been thinking about things around the same line as him.”

Ridiculous. Damn it. He should just let this happen with Luna. He wasn’t involved. It wasn’t his problem. He warned her, but everything Xenos wanted with her, was going to be reciprocated. Except one important thing.

Something that had been frying it’s way into his skull. As of yet, he didn’t say anything. He was stangely in an emotional sort of failure state still. Not the best state to be in, with decisions like these. But. He would win.

He’d be judged like hella crazy by everyone. He didn’t know how the Kingdom of Science would take it. It wasn’t the first time he did something that they really didn’t understand.

It did come down to science though. He never thought things with Luna, would come to simple science. Even simple science though, could change lives forever. It wasn’t a light decision. It didn’t guarantee any happy ending. But, it did . . . it would affect him greatly.

Luna had been a quick detour on Friday night for noodles. She was the weird woman who was using him as her shield, while acting with others like he was her boyfriend because she saved his life. She was useful for political gain. That was the extent.

Then the first time she tried to convey things. She didn't give everything away, but he got the point. She wanted someone safe she could have a romance with, but didn't demand other things.

He was the perfect fit for her. He was the perfect boyfriend.

Now. No one was saving his life. He already gave his warning, he could wash his hands of the whole thing. Xenos definitely didn't appreciate him there, and after what he was going to bring to the table, they definitely would not be working on any more tasks together.

It was ten billion percent ridiculous. But. Mankind did evolve. He wasn't fifteen in school anymore, waiting to see if Taiju would tell Yuzuriha his feelings. In fact, he was probably closer to the age of Doctor Xenos, when he had been petrified now.

Right. Science itself was ridiculous. He was ready for this.

You know? At least Dr. Xenos went through her grandfather politely, and at least he wasn't actually acting like he simply fell in love. He was laying it all out in the same way. He wished to spend his days with someone wonderful. He wanted children. He would teach his children everything he knew about science.

It all looked good on the surface. If it was just that, Luna would ten billion percent say yes. She wanted kids. Xenos would stay in their lives as a good father. But, there was more than that to it and Luna wasn't going to say it.

Which would give him the win. "I have another proposal," Senkuu said as he raised his hand. "I'd like to address with you, Miss Luna Wright, another idea." He stood up. "You can have in vitro with me."

What?

"What are you doing, Senkuu?" Dr. Xenos warned him.

"You don't have to worry about completing any loops with me. No stress," he said again. "You can let science handle that part, and I'll stick around in their lives to make sure they become good people of the Kingdom of Science."

What? Did her ears just hear that? Giving her some extra time to warn about Xenos, she completely could see that. It was weird, getting his undivided attention, but she could see why it was important enough to him before. But this? This?!

"Get excited. You just landed yourself a boyfriend again," Senkuu said.

This was. What was this? This kind of decision took time to make, what was he even doing, declaring it out like that? Because he was Senkuu. Because it's the way he did things. Well,

this wasn’t a light topic. She stood up. “I am ten billion percent sure you can shove that where the sun doesn’t shine, Senkuu.” She bowed and walked away.

Okay. Well, he did just have Friday noodles with her, he wasn’t a mind reader.

“I believe that was a pretty firm answer,” Xenos said. “Some things you don’t quite declare as loudly in that way.”

Right. Too showy to her. He followed her, but found himself being stopped by of all people? Max. “Let me through.”

“Nuh uh. I heard that crap,” Max said to him. “You can go cool off your heels, Miss Luna doesn’t need any of that.”

Senkuu moved away. It was obvious she would head for a more out of the way location. He just had to reason where the most out of the way locations were. There weren’t many. If he had embarrassed her enough and she didn’t plan on coming back?

He headed toward the entrance and saw her. “Luna.” She didn’t want to look back, so he moved faster to her. “Luna Wright, give me a chance to explain things better.”

“I’m not a science project, Senkuu,” she declared. “This isn’t a competition with Dr. Xenos. This is my life, and my future. You need to take whatever that declaration had been, and be serious.”

“I always start big endeavors that way,” he said. “This isn’t small, it is a giant endeavour.”

“That you were thinking about for how long?”

Damn. “About fifteen minutes.” She was starting to leave again. “It’s a better option, Luna. I don’t go back on things.”

“I don’t get it,” she said. “Why have you . . . even cared that much? I get that you were scared that Dr. Xenos would trick me in some way, but we’ve already had a discussion about it. So why are you doing this?”

Why. “Byakuya was bones. He was the man that raised me, I lost my parents. If time travel worked, then there was no chance that would be the case. He’s gone. Everything we restored here, is all that will ever be.” It wasn’t an answer. But in a way. “I learned from him.”

She visibly softened. “Oh.”

Not only that. “Mankind evolves.” Senkuu knew he had been stuck in a science loop for too long. He never moved out of that loop for anything else. Maybe it was a form of cheating Xenos, what he was doing now. Luna really was perfect for practice, but he didn’t want to say it that way. It wasn’t just relationships either, he’d always been more isolated from how he treated others. Science brought him into the fold of mankind. Otherwise. “I still don’t think I’m gonna be perfect boyfriend material. I haven’t evolved that much.”

“I’ve seen evolution so far,” she said. “I’m? I’m not, not considering it anymore.” She gave into that much. “But this isn’t something to be decided in fifteen minutes, Senkuu.”

It was a start. If he could get a yes from her, get this done, get closer to her. Maybe he could finally knock Carlos and Max away. Maybe? Maybe he’d even take their place. Maybe. Did he want to take their place? Did he want to just start the next future scientists?

It was hard to say. But one thing was sure.

Evolution.

Chapter 4: Two Brilliant Men

Kingdom of Science (Ishigami Village)

“Senkuu!”

Oh. That was Chrome’s voice. “Here.”

Chrome immediately came over, like he was on a mission. “What do you think you are doing?”

“Unassembling another part of a time machine that’ll never work,” Senkuu said. “Gotta strip it for parts.”

“Not that,” Chrome complained. “Luna. Did you really say at some party last night that you wanted to have Luna’s kids?”

Ah. Word got around fast. “Yeah, I did.”

“Luna. The odd woman that essentially was supposed to point to kill you, and ended up saving you if you’d be her boyfriend?” Chrome asked. “Why?”

“She wants a kid.” Senkuu grabbed a wrench. “I think having a kid is a good idea for me too. The compatible timing works.”

“And it had nothing to do with the fact Dr. Xenos also recommended it for himself?”

Wow, Chrome was full of knowledge today. “If you get everything, then why ask?”

“What about . . . I don’t know, Kohaku?”

Kohaku? He watched as Kohaku also came into the room. Busy day. “Are you wanting a kid too?”

“What? No!” She sounded offended.

Well, that was the end of that conversation. Senkuu went back over with the wrench.

“Senkuu, trust me. Pull yourself away from that decision. Just, let Xenos have her,” Chrome said. “Xenos didn’t even say in vitro in front of everyone, he was talking about a real relationship.”

“Which isn’t what she needs,” Senkuu said. “I can’t tell you more, but what Xenos wants isn’t good for her. My idea works.”

“Senkuu, this is incredibly stupid!” Kohaku was really hot under the collar. “You can’t just. You don’t just promise yourself to someone else like that for a future kid! I mean, why her? Why pick someone like her to start a family with?”

“It’s convenient.” He already said that. “It’s mutually beneficial.”

“Having a kid to raise is hard work, not mutually beneficial,” Chrome disagreed. “If you want kids, you should be looking for someone-”

“Someone that doesn’t leave,” Kohaku said. “Someone you’ve always trusted. But not like, you don’t just walk up and be like ‘baby please’ to her.”

“Yeah, I get it. That method didn’t work as well last night,” Senkuu agreed. “More subtle.”

“That’s not what I meant.” Kohaku folded her arms. “Children are the very last step. Before that is marriage, and even that isn’t right away. You have to get to know each other. Go on outings. Spend years knowing each other.”

“Well, science devised a cheat so I can skip all that.” He put the wrench down and picked up another one. That one? Not that one.

“Luna wanted a boyfriend, Senkuu. You get involved with her through a kid, and she is going to try and pull you down,” Chrome said. “I know she isn’t an evil person, but having a baby means she is going to want to get closer to you.”

“Yeah, I know. I’ll be boyfriend again.” Senkuu picked up another wrench. Not that one either. Did it fall?

“It’s not the same. Last time, it was for a reason, to get Corn City on our side,” Chrome pointed out. “You didn’t even have to do anything.”

“You do this stupid move, and it won’t be fake, she’ll expect stuff!” Kohaku yelled.

Man, Kohaku was extra mad. Senkuu was looking for the right wrench. There it was, it did fall.

“Unless you plan on doing kissing and hugging and other stuff, you need to knock off this deal, Senkuu!” Kohaku demanded. “Walk right up to her in her cozy little family mansion place, and tell her to shove it!”

Senkuu picked up the wrench. “I’m the one who made the deal, so what would she be shoving exactly?” Her anger was extreme. Her fighting spirit was usually angry, but she was way more angry today.

“Why her?” Kohaku asked.

He already answered that.

“Is it because she’s super smart? She’s okay in the smarts, but she’s not a genius,” Kohaku said.

“I’ve never run any test on her,” Senkuu answered. “I never bothered running tests on myself either.”

“You’re a super genius, Senkuu. You don’t need a test,” she answered.

“It’s more than just some genius gene anyhow, it’s about learning. Look how far the Kingdom of Science came with all it’s endeavors. We’ve built up a long way since Senkuu Cola.” More than just him.

“Oh. That’s true.” Kohaku smiled. “We have built up a lot.”

“Her family is full of geniuses that made things that changed the history of production,” Chrome said. “Your chances are much higher with her to have a smart kid than with just one random smart woman.”

“That doesn’t matter much though, does it?” Kohaku asked.

“Scientifically speaking, it’s why Xenos had designs on her,” Senkuu admitted. “Smart people that keep smart family lines typically create higher than above average children.” It wasn’t why he chose her though.

Maybe he should have said the ‘it wasn’t why he chose her’ part out loud as he heard Kohaku furiously leave out the doors. Better late than never. “It’s not why I chose her, Chrome. That’s why Xenos chose her.”

“But you piggybacked off of him,” Chrome pointed out. “Why?”

Damn. “I can’t tell you why exactly. Just that Luna Wright isn’t what everyone expects.”

“Sennnnnkuuuuu!”

Taiju. Of course. Who else barreled into a place like that. “Yeah?”

“Are you having a baby?!”

“Not yet. I haven’t gotten her to accept the proposal yet.”

“You proposed too?!”

“Not that kind of proposal, Big Oaf.”

“But I didn’t even know you were still dating!”

“We aren’t.”

“But you are going to have a baby?”

“He’s going to have a baby scientifically,” Chrome told Taiju. “No touching.”

“Uh? Why?” Taiju scratched his head. “I don’t get it.”

“Senkuu wants to be a dad,” Chrome said to him. “She wants a kid. He thinks it’s a good match.”

“But if you do have a baby, your basically in a relationship. Aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I become boyfriend again.”

“Nothing’s in writing,” Chrome said to Senkuu. “You should really think about this, Senkuu. You spent years with Kohaku right next to you.”

What? "Why do you keep saying that?" Senkuu's question was avoided.

“Kohaku was loyal. Always ready to fight for the kingdom. Luna was . . . what?”

“Friday noodles,” Senkuu said. If Chrome wasn't going to explain, he'd figure it out later. Until then, his decision stood. “I am the last Ishigami. Luna Wright wants a baby. I want to move on with something new, and dismantle this already.” He wanted to start using different parts for different experiments. Different things. Different possibilities. “The past can’t come back. I’m looking toward the future.” And since he was metaphorically getting beaten up, he would take a small break.

To advanced his chances for that future.

It was nice having her family back in her life after the petrification. Seeing her mom and dad after all those years? It was great. But.

That meant her mad scientist sister was back too. She loved her sister. But-

Someone knocked on the door.

“Wait and check the camera.”

“I don’t have a camera,” Luna said.

“Stupid. Get a camera system, who knows who is sneaking onto your property.” Her sister went to the door and looked out. “You know a guy with spiky, freaky green and white hair?”

Senkuu. “Yes.” Luna answered her door, not surprised at the guest, but what he had. “Senkuu?” With noodles. “Its not Friday.” She smiled and took the bowl. “More options now.” But. He kept them the same. Stone World noodles.

“Its been more than 15 minutes,” Senkuu told her.

Clever man. “Its been hours since last night. Did you have any trouble finding my place?”

“It wasn't hard. Xenos dug up a lot on you. Starting with key words. I don't think he knew everything about you during Corn City,” Senkuu told her. “I wouldn't be surprised if he was already making plans when that guy Lenny was playing lets share all the secrets and then get my ass beat.”

Then, her sister came to the door. “Senkuu?”

“Yeah,” he greeted her. “You must be-”

“You’re the one who wants in vitro, what’s your deal, everyone wants fucking sex. Men are all about sex! Are you asexual or something?”

Oh, god! Luna winced on instinct from that.

“Uuh, hello to you too?”

“Or are you up to something to hit that?” Her sister said. “I can’t tell. Luna isn’t the brightest in the family line, so if you are trying to take advantage of her dumbness by pretending to be all noble? You are going to find something highly interesting happening to you from your everyday accessories you would never dream of checking.”

Ugh! “That is Senkuu, he’s one of the scientists that saved us from the Stone World!”

“Basic mechanics once you figure out the nitric acid.” Her sister wasn’t impressed. “He’s not dumb I guess to do that.” She leered at him.

Senkuu took a step back. “You must be Yukari Wright.”

She brushed right past him and left.

Senkuu had a weird expression on his face. “That just happened.”

“She’s . . . sticky,” Luna apologized. She picked her noodles back up. “These are really good. Something about the original ones, the other ones just can’t replace.”

“All natural ingredients,” he said. “Earliest recipe. Used it the first time before the Kingdom of Science was established.”

Oh, but speaking of which. Dr. Xenos was coming toward her place too. Thank goodness Yukari was gone now. “Hello.”

“Hello, Luna.” Dr. Xeno looked toward Senkuu. “Senkuu.”

“Xenos,” Senkuu said to him.

Neither of them were fighting. Nice and proper. Brilliant men were so her type.

Senkuu. First perfect boyfriend. He wasn’t going to make her confront anything. He was fine with in vitro.

Doctor Xenos. Someone she had known for some time. Xenos was interested in her because he wanted children before he got too old to teach them. Xenos wanted a relationship though.

Both wanted to raise her children. She hated challenges over her, but both of them were being . . . so polite! Just at the door. Calm. Composed. Not biting at each other with words at all. “Carlos and Max don't like the ideas.”

“Luna, the elegant decision is yours and yours alone,” Dr. Xenos said.

“Carlos and Max should each fall in a wood chipper.” Senkuu’s reaction was much less refined.

She couldn't blame him. He knew their flaws. What happened. What she was using them for now. Senkuu knew her secrets. He really was . . . perfect, but she didn’t know about how he got along with Carlos and Max! And she needed them! Especially with Yukari back. “Carlos and Max go with me to most places.”

“I don't mind who you want to accompany you,” Dr. Xeno said politely.

She looked toward Senkuu.

“One problem at a time. We can iron out the small things as time goes by. A bigger one is, will you move closer to the Kingdom of Science again?”

“Oh of course, good point,” Doctor Xenos said. “That would be a more elegant decision. I would see you and the children more often if you came closer to the new NASA. If you agreed, I could find you a hospital to relocate to, if you wished. Or help you with relocating homes if you wish not to continue working. All your choice.”

Still so sweet. They were both going to be great. Except? That she did have to more intimate. But. She still needed to practice that. Therapy was good for her. She had even maintained a boyfriend for a little while with hugging and kissing. She was getting really good at that.

The challenge part was the more part. If she was able to start working with Max. “Can I have more time, like six months maybe?”

“Of course,” Xenos said.

“No.” Senkuu said firmly. “Ten billion percent no. No Max, Luna Wright.”

Damn! She moved to set her noodles down. Senkuu knew. He knew everything. “I need time. You should leave.”

“As you wish.” Dr. Xeno nodded. “Please don't be a stranger.”

Dr. Xeno was leaving.

Senkuu didn't move. “You’re still eating your noodles.”

“I am not hungry right now.”

“Don't do it. If I think you tried it, I will spill your secret, Luna.”

What? “You wouldn't!”

“I would,” he disagreed. “I'll play dirty if it keeps you from hurting yourself. Making out. Kissing. Hugging. Even groping, its harmless. Max will not be.”

“Max can be gentle.”

“Not what I meant. You want to know if you pick me, what happens to Carlos and Max.”

He couldn’t say much in front of Dr. Xenos. “What happens?”

“Max stays bodyguard. Carlos stays driver. If I know you are screwing around on your boyfriend, which is me again, then I will have to do something about them.”

Boyfriend?

“I told you before at NASA. I make split second decisions all the time. It doesn't mean I break them. When I say I am going to do something, only certain laws of physics can stop me. So, I'll say it again, and I will add something that I couldn’t say in my speech. I want to have a baby, with you, via in vitro. And. I am replacing Carlos.”

He couldn't mean that. “His driving.”

“I promised to be your boyfriend. I don't recall ever breaking up with you.”

Oh, he couldn't play that card. “You never came over for noodles again.”

“I was busy. Live far away. I came over today.”

“Kohaku said the pretending was done.”

“Kohaku isn't me.”

“You are just looking for an excuse, Senkuu. I am not that dumb.” Then?

Senkuu took her hand. He was holding her hand?! He never held her hand. He was actually looking her in the eyes, his whole focus on her.

. . . And then he spoke. “Alright fine, I am terrible at romance, Luna, you know I have the better deal, you can’t handle Xenos, you can't handle Max, and I will deal with issues when they come up.”

She would give him some credit. In that whole mess, he still never tried to steal a touch under false pretenses. Still never tried to undress her with his eyes.

He was still her boyfriend, Senkuu. Complete with noodles, and he just wanted a baby so his family went on.

“Will you come back to the Kingdom of Science with me? I will share more noodles?”

“Are you okay, Luna?” Max had just realized who she was talking to at the door. But, he had checked a little too late.

Luna was gone with only a note, scrawled in handwriting that wasn't hers.

Kingdom of Science.

Chapter 5: Like Cherry Blossoms Always Works

Luna never even had to say a word, it was obvious where her phobia came from. Yukari Wright. Damn, that woman was bold. Definitely smart, but she also talked down to Luna as well. That wasn't right.

It was obvious to see why Luna didn't have any boyfriends before him. Her sister probably scared every single one of them away, if they didn't meet her approval. And if the guy who was in charge of unpetrifying everything was barely good enough? Yeah.

He'd been talking science to her, to test her more efficiently for compatibility. She didn't just have no problem with it, she became more attuned to him when he went on and on. A lot of his people from the Kingdom of Science did love to listen too. To a point. But they never looked at him like that.

Luna was enamoured. Not only could he continue to work on his science, he scored points in the romance without even having to do any of the stupid actions like love poems, overused flirting mechanisms, or anything of that sort. Just, talking science.

When people heard something new and fascinating, they listened intently.

When he told her something, she fell into him like a pool of gravy, headfirst.

Easy. She'd eventually get more used to him, that's how things go, and it wouldn't be as intense. Then he'd have to check her again. Was she actually paying attention by then, or would she start to avoid it?

So after about two hours of talking, he started to let her participate in dismantling another part of the time machine. There were several layers to that machine, it wasn't the whole thing. Just parts upon layers of more parts.

She was able to follow the directions to help. Still interested. That made sense, she was raised around the likes of people who probably liked challenging things.

Now, it was time to see where her phobias lied. Were they really phobia's from the actions, or was it from the intensity of her sister? Was she petrified when she was kissing Carlos, or did she enjoy it and feel safer because she was used to him? He'd never seen it in action. He'd asked Chrome a little more one time. He said things that definitley spelled a panic attack, but did it come from the kissing or some kind of regression?

Getting a handle on the trigger, would be able to show him when he could make Carlos and Max walk off into the stupid sun. "It's quite fascinating, isn't it?"

"There are a lot of tiny parts." She held the smallest screwdriver.

"Great. Do you want to try kissing me?" There. Her reaction.

“ . . . what are you up to?” She eventually figured it out that he wasn’t being sincere. Before that? Yep, she didn’t clam up or get fearful at all. She clearly liked the thought of kissing. Which meant it was the person she was kissing that was probably the thing that counted the most.

With as . . . vivacious as Yukari Wright was, it was possible her sister could have even been labeling her as things she hadn’t even been. He wouldn’t know for sure for some time the whole level, but he could tell, at least for now. She would absolutely not have any problem with kissing him. “Don’t you know by now? I’m always up to something.”

At the very least he could get rid of Carlos if he had to soon. He was just a crutch, something she thought she needed to keep up to stay better.

“I think this one is stripped.” She handed it back.

Yeah, it wasn’t perfect. “It’s fine, we got what we needed from this piece.”

Then, Chrome came in. He knew eventually the Kingdom of Science would discover her. It probably wouldn’t score points with Luna if anyone was to harsh with her, but it might score better points in making them understand.

He wasn’t backing down from his actions.

He understood his actions.

They hadn’t judged him like this for some time but it’s because the thing he wanted to make wasn’t a creation of things from nature. It was nature. It was the creation of man itself. And as amazing as that was, just about any healthy human being that was of age could participate in it, so the awe of the event was gone. Just the seriousness. The consequences. All of the articles, risks, warnings that were known about it throughout the generations were choking their points of view.

So he needed to change the view. The more he could keep Luna around, the more they would understand it.

He moved fast. He never moved irresponsibly. There was a difference.

Yep, Senku brought her. Chrome couldn’t believe it. Luna was back, away from her influential family. Was it just for today? Was it for good? This woman. Luna Wright. He had no idea what to make of her anymore. At first she was the crazy woman who just wanted to kill and save Senkuu. Then she was a poor woman stuck in panic attacks.

Now she was the person that was supposed to being carrying Senkuu’s kid, using science. Using a process that wasn’t natural at all, to create a human being. Nothing happened to the actual fetus that was different, they just moved things from one person to another. Which was . . . different. Not anything Stone World ever heard about before. Even Chrome hadn’t heard

about it for a little while as the world was getting built up to what it used to be way before he was born.

Weird girl, carrying the science baby, that Senkuu wanted to shortcut with. Wanted to forget all about connections, and head straight to the finish line. It wasn't the first time in science they used shortcuts to get to something. Especially things like platinum for nitric acid. Mankind couldn't have been unpetrified without that.

But this? This wasn't the same. This was a baby, a human, and Senkuu just deciding this on a whim? Seeing her, didn't make Chrome feel any better.

"Hey, Chrome." Senkuu said it like there was nothing wrong. "We got a visitor."

Good. It was visitor. "Hey, Luna," he greeted her politely.

"Hello." Same degree of politeness.

Then, the next thing inevitably happened. Kohaku came in. She probably heard it too. Senkuu wasn't just walking around with her, he went straight there and snuck her in. He would have known everyone would find out, so why bother?

Kohaku had her arms folded. "Luna."

"Hello, Kohaku." Luna was a little more open with her. Kohaku had stayed with her right before she left. "How have you been?"

"I'm still the same," Kohaku replied. "I didn't run off to a rich family of geniuses or anything."

Ooh. Snipey. Kohaku could do worse though. She was confused and angry about the situation. Before the Kingdom of Science, Ishigami village usually paired off others. It wasn't something that really needed Senkuu's attention to it. Even if they told him he'd probably be 'whatever' to it.

Although Ruri had a whole competition for her, others didn't have to use that. They could use basic meet, greet, and decide. However, sometimes others just didn't fall in line. They weren't into anyone, or anyone in the village anyhow. They were *still* paired, usually to someone older that lost their pairing, because it was more like a friendship for life.

Everyone paired. It's just how it had been. Because everyone deserved someone. Even if a wife or husband died, another person that was waiting to pair, would pair with them. They'd grieve and be close friends the rest of their lives.

Since Kohaku was good friends with Senkuu, everyone chose them to be paired together, but it was pretty clear by the first year of Senkuu's stay, that Senkuu's love was science and nothing else. He married Ruri, and divorced her in seconds. He had no interest in anyone.

So, Kohaku didn't bother Senkuu in any way, shape or form with any traditional romance routines. She had to decide to either pair up with someone else at Ishigami village, or choose the first choice, Senkuu, and be loveless for her life.

Loveless meant no romance. Loveless meant no children. Loveless meant plutonic to Senkuu, and plutonic to everyone. It meant staying by Senkuu, even if she saw someone she wanted to step away to.

She made that final choice when the Perseus voyage came. She went, and chose loveless. She didn't stay and choose any of the guys there, she chose to stay paired with Senkuu as his fighter, and be loveless.

Even the whole Luna Wright thing never bothered anyone, becuase Senku made it clear right away. It wasn't real, it just gave them the upper hand. It was a trick, so it didn't bother anybody.

But then. Out of nowhere.

Senkuu decided to have a science baby, and break every single rule!

Chrome tried to hint to him that it wasn't a good idea. For a thousand different reasons besides Kohaku. That genius had no idea what was coming. It wasn't Chrome's place to tell him about the pairing stuff, it was only the place of the pairing once paired. The village stayed out of it once the pairings were decided.

It was Kohaku that had to say something.

She never said something.

Well, now, she was probably going to say something.

Luna was a little surprised by the abruptness from Kohaku. She'd been pretty nice when they lived together. "Excuse me?"

"There are certain things you do with Science, but having a baby without a man isn't one of them!"

"Whoah, Kohaku." Senkuu stood up. "It's perfectly scientific to have a baby without a man, it's-"

"I don't want to hear it from you, Senkuu!"

Luna couldn't describe it. Kohaku was hot fire. Maybe she had feelings for Senkuu? Oof. She didn't like that. "Science makes the impossible, possible, and I can have a baby in any way I choose!"

"Not that way, it's not possible that way, that is a natural thing! You are creating what creates science, man!" Kohaku yelled back. "Absolutely unnatural!"

"Kohaku!" Senkuu actually yelled now. "Stop. Right now."

“You stop, Senkuu,” she warned him. “You have no right to do this! She’s even a blasted outsider!”

Outsider? She was still a human being. It didn’t matter where she lived, she still had the same values as the Kingdom of Science.

Kohaku slammed her hands down in front of Luna. “Go have sex with a man like everyone else!”

Okay, that was it! This avoidance tactic wasn’t working and Luna just left like her butt was on fire panic. “Alright, alright!” Senkuu stood in front of Kohaku. “There’s something going on that nobody has told me about, so I claim whatever is pissing you off, you better think about that first! Then? I want to know what the hell is going on when I get back.”

Luna looked around. Where did she run too? She got triggered and her adrenaline just made her take off before she even knew where she was going.

“Oh, its you again.”

Luna recognized one of the guards. “Hello.”

“You are the one who is going to carry Senkuu's baby, right?” He asked.

“I don't know yet,” she said.

“Well, not that it wouldn't be cool and all? Its just kind of-”

“Which way back to Senkuu?” She didn’t need to hear it again.

“Oh, not far.” He pointed to the right. “Oh, I see him!” He waved. “Senkuu, hey! Your future baby momma is right here!” He held his ear out. “What did you say?! Don't yell out whaaat?! Oh.” He stuck his hand behind his head. “I wasn't supposed to yell about you being the mom yet.”

“Of course not, I haven't accepted,” she agreed. She was Senkuu come over. “I just needed a breather.”

“Yeah, I see. You good?” Senkuu asked politely.

She nodded.

He looked toward the guard. “Can you watch her for a little while without yelling about her, Ginro? I have something I need to handle.”

“Oh. No problem, Senkuu.”

Senkuu looked back at her. “I gotta get to the bottom of that. That wasn’t Kohaku at all. I won't be gone longer than I have to.”

“Oh, you mean the whole loveless pair thing for you and Kohako?” Ginro asked. Then he covered his mouth. “Oh no!” Then he stared at Senkuu. “Hang on, am I still in trouble with the Kingdom of Science with that? I am not going to lose a finger, am I?!”

Senkuu made it back to the lab. Fast. Ginro's slip up was just what he needed. Now he had a tiger to heel named Kohaku.

Kohaku didn’t want to say it at first. To get at the beast of the problem, he let her drone on knowing at some point she would slip up. She just brought up the non-nature of it all for awhile, then how it was so unfair he made her guard Luna when she was there, how he always used her just for fighting, on and on and on, and then-

“You are supposed to stay plutonic with anyone and everyone, no kids ever!”

Now that? Was a freaky thing to say, but now he had an opening. “Why am I supposed to stay plutonic?” Then.

Chrome finally spoke in the room. “I have to wait until she brings it up. She technically just brought it up.”

Senkuu watched as Kohaku just left. He didn’t bother following, it looked like he had his way to the answer.

And the answer was abysmal. Shaming. And putrid. Old village things, he knew it. Traditions that literally chopped off a finger for messing up.

He could see why it was used, especially for the elderly. But to that degree?

And the way they handled it. Normally, Senkuu was filled with science lessons. This time. “We put labels on things that are constants that don't change. Mankind evolves. Tell Kohaku I am not following the tradition, and neither does she have to. This pairing tradition is abolished. She can date who she wants. She can live her life however she wants.”

He did his very best not to scream over the primitiveness of the rules. They were useful back then to keep everyone safe and the village running. But times change.

“Sorry, Senkuu. It wasn’t allowed. When it was, we all figured you wouldn't care.”

“Bad call. I didn’t, but I still needed to know so I could end it. New rule for the Kingdom of Science.” He spread out his hands. “No more labels and never assume! Equations and formulas are formed over years of testing, not because someone just came up with it.”

“You seemed like a constant,” Chrome said. “Until.”

“Until what?”

“Until you said you had nothing against romance, you just didn't have time for it? It just made everyone scratch their heads when they found out you said that. Sorry, Senkuu.”

One random phrase.

“Kohaku is probably going to be mad for awhile. I wouldn't call on her unless its really important. What you are doing now was only done twice before in the village.”

“No happy ending I bet.”

“Offender was killed in one. In another both the pair were killed. It doesn't say the circumstances clearly.”

“Modern world, Chrome.” Even in a modern world, some things just didn't die.

“This one is going to hit harder, Senkuu. Its the oldest tradition of all. People are not going to take nicely to Luna. Unless you start with finding someone for Kohako first, even without knowing, no one is going to be on your side. Even that is no guaranter, but it might ear empathy. Traditions die really hard, you know that, but this one is solid diamond. Even after that, you still need to-”

“No.” Plain and simple. “I will talk to Kohako later when she has cooled down. I am not finding someone for her, that is her choice to find whoever she wants. In or out of the village. But if you talk to her, tell her she is still ten billion percent my friend. Hell, to stay beside me she thought she had to give up everything she might want in the future.” Damn. “Actually, I'll sponsor her to go on adventures outside the village if she wants. Any dating fees, I'll take them on. It's not my responsibility, but my friend is hurting because of a tradition she never had to follow.”

“What about the pairings that weren’t chosen now? The older people that are going to leave. The ones who are disabled. They won't have anyone watching them. The others that were paired with someone who lost another. The grief will be singular. Their partner can leave whenever they want, trust will be gone.”

And how did he miss those things? He wasn’t looking at those factors. “Get me all of the pairings we have now.” They might have to design some new systems to take care of people.

“With this kind of help. It might be okay,” Chrome said to him. “I would still move slow-”

“I am going to move at the speed Luna wants. Just one thing, when you see Kohaku again,” he warned him. “She eventually needs to apologize. That was all uncalled for.”

“Yeah, she definitely scared Luna.”

She didn't scare Luna. “Maybe it was an accident.” If Luna had told Kohaku about her problems though?

Nah. Not now. He had to go get Luna, she would want to head away soon. Its why he tried to keep her hidden at first. Just some studying before reality happened.

It didn't help his case, or his chances with Luna. But, it did show more reality than constant positivity. As a medical professional, she should see all the angles for the best decisions.

He went back to her. Ginro had been nice enough to hide her when she was getting bombarded with questions.

“I am ready to go home,” she said.

“Yeah, I figured. Come on.” They walked together. “Did you tell Kohako anything when she lived with you?”

“I have never told anyone but you, Senkuu.”

Just him. Kohaku was really just an accident then. “So their might be some slight issues, but they will get ironed out. Had to test the waters.”

“I understand, Senkuu,” she said. “But? I am a capable woman. I think I should go to NASA.”

Senkuu instantly stopped. “It was one bad visit!” Capable his ass! She wanted to run to Xenos?

“I mean to visit!” She shouted. “If your visit showed this, then it might be good to see his side too.”

Senkuu bit back his comment. Technically, it would be better to get in all the factors. If it was a great and simple visit and he kept it steady and let her say whatever, like she needed six months and Max, she might come back with a decision for him.

Xenos was tricky. He could lure her into something with some kind of unknown offer. He had to think. Something to keep her from choosing him right away.

He couldn't cheat with noodles, he just tried that.

Ice cream. A favorite in the village. Same color as her hair. Pair them together somehow and he should get a result. “How about ice cream before you go? Your hair reminded me of Ishigamis ice cream.” Did that work? Usually someone would see an object and connect it to appearance instead. Maybe he needed something else. “Its like the cover of cherry blossoms.” Cherry blossoms were a gimme.

“Oh, Senkuu! You really think my hair is like soft ice cream and cherry blossoms?”

Yep, not only that, she was hugging with no problem. It wasn’t the first time she did that. If he wrapped his arm around her, she would realize it. To her mind, it wasn’t even on the board because she made the action.

He would test the theories out later, right now he needed to use it to secure his spot with her weakness.

She was still gullible.

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